

The Air Force Journal of Occupational, Recreational, and Driving Safety

# ROAD & REC

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# ROAD & REC



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# Short Circuits

## Auto Recalls

*The Traffic Safety Administration has recently announced the following recalls.*

**1999-2001 Suzuki Grand Vitara.** Number Involved — 59,888. Defect: On certain sport utility vehicles, when temperatures are below minus 13 degrees F, moisture can freeze in the fuel pressure regulator. Fuel system pressure could increase at the time of engine start-up, causing fuel loss at the fuel pipe/fuel hose connection. Fuel loss in the presence of an ignition source could result in a fire. (NHTSA Recall No. 01V146, Suzuki Recall No. X4)

**1999 Dodge Dakota, Durango, Ram, Intrepid, Caravan; Chrysler Concorde, LHS, Town and Country; Jeep Grand Cherokee.** Number Involved — 161,682. Defect: Certain van, wagon, passenger, light trucks and sport utility vehicles fail to comply with the requirements of Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 289, Seat Belt Assemblies. The front seat belt retractor does not comply with the requirements of the standard. If the retractor does not work properly, it will not adequately protect occupants in the event of a crash. (NHTSA Recall No. 01V119, Daimler/Chrysler Recall No. 978) Note: Daimler/Chrysler has not yet provided NHTSA with an owner notification schedule.

**1999-2000 Ford Mustang Cobra, 2000 Ford Mustang Cobra R.** Number Involved — 8,100. Defect: In certain of these vehicles, if the ball joint assembly

attaches to the rear knuckle moves forward or backward from its installed position, greater stress will be placed on the knuckle casting. If this occurs, the casting could fracture, allowing the corner of the vehicle to drop and the lower control arm to contact the inside of the rear wheel. In some cases, steering of the vehicle could be reduced. (NHTSA Recall No. 0V121, Ford Recall No. 01S15)

**2000-2001 Ford Taurus, Mercury Cougar.** Number Involved 157,000. Defect: On certain vehicles equipped with adjustable pedals, if grease from the adjustable pedal assembly enters the stop lamp switch, it can contaminate the contacts, resulting in a carbon build-up and, potentially, a short circuit. A short circuit could lead to either the brake lamps staying on or a loss of brake lamp function, increasing the risk of a crash. (NHTSA Recall No. 01V078, Ford Recall No. 01S08)

**1997-2001 Chevrolet Venture, Pontiac Montana, Oldsmobile Silhouette; 1997-1998 Pontiac Transport.** Number Involved — 477,011. Defect: On certain minivans equipped with passenger-side power sliding doors, the door may close but not be latched. If this happens, the sliding door can open while the vehicle is in motion, particularly when the vehicle climbs a hill, makes a turn, or travels over a rough road surface. An unrestrained occupant could fall out of the vehicle and be injured. (NHTSA Recall No. 01V067, GM Recall No. 01013)

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# Dressed for Disaster

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Photos provided by author

**W**hen my wife and I left our home on our Honda Gold Wing motorcycle early on a Friday morning we could not know that we were destined to crash. Before we left, we made all of the decisions we were going to have the opportunity to make to influence the outcome of this accident. Although I

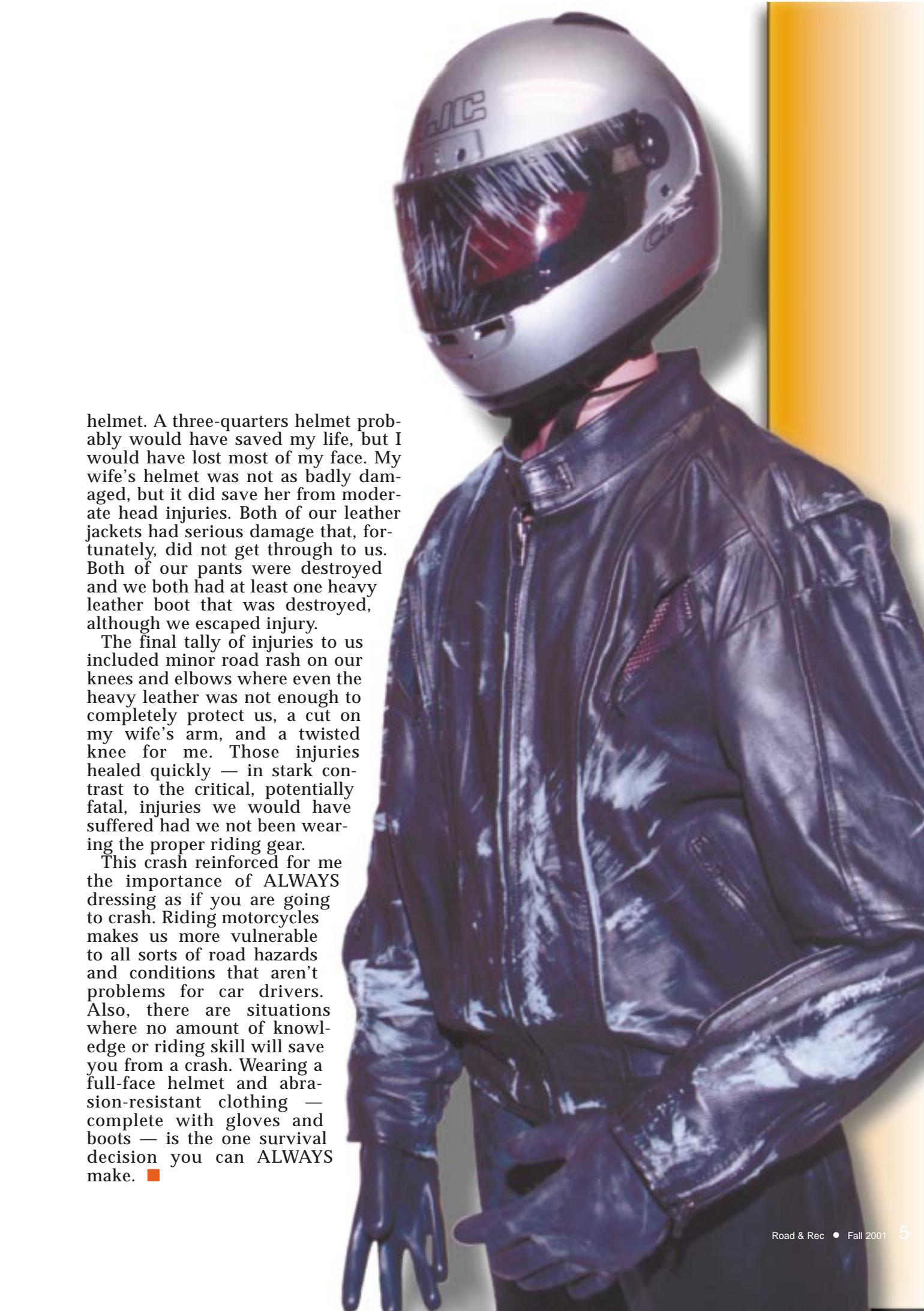


had taken the Motorcycle Safety Foundation's Experienced Rider Course and was an experienced rider, none of that was going to prevent this accident.

We left home early in the morning so that we could ride for a couple of hours and be back before the August heat made riding unpleasant. We could have chosen to wait until later in the day and not ride in our full leathers because of the heat; but we'd already decided that we needed to ride with full protection or not ride at all.

We were on our way from Greenwood, Ark., to Devils Den State Park and back. We were riding on Highway 74 and were almost to the park when I came around a right-hand curve at 40 mph and saw a deer. I knew there had to be others and I wanted to slow down. However, I never got the chance before another deer in a ditch on the right jumped in front of me. I hit it, which turned the motorcycle's front wheel sharply to the left, and caused the bike to go down **HARD** on its right side. My wife and I were thrown off and slid about 50 feet down a very abrasive road surface. Having flown jet fighters for more than 30 years, I know what it's like to have things happen quickly. In this instance there was **NO** time to brake, dodge or swerve. The accident was over in an instant.

When we finally made it home, we began to assess both our injuries and how well our **FULL-FACE** helmets and leathers had protected us. I looked at my helmet and was shocked at the damage it suffered. I believe I would have been killed without my



helmet. A three-quarters helmet probably would have saved my life, but I would have lost most of my face. My wife's helmet was not as badly damaged, but it did save her from moderate head injuries. Both of our leather jackets had serious damage that, fortunately, did not get through to us. Both of our pants were destroyed and we both had at least one heavy leather boot that was destroyed, although we escaped injury.

The final tally of injuries to us included minor road rash on our knees and elbows where even the heavy leather was not enough to completely protect us, a cut on my wife's arm, and a twisted knee for me. Those injuries healed quickly — in stark contrast to the critical, potentially fatal, injuries we would have suffered had we not been wearing the proper riding gear.

This crash reinforced for me the importance of ALWAYS dressing as if you are going to crash. Riding motorcycles makes us more vulnerable to all sorts of road hazards and conditions that aren't problems for car drivers. Also, there are situations where no amount of knowledge or riding skill will save you from a crash. Wearing a full-face helmet and abrasion-resistant clothing — complete with gloves and boots — is the one survival decision you can ALWAYS make. ■

# I Gotta Wear What?

TSGT BILL MCDANIEL  
55 WG/SEW  
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**B**eing in the safety office, I get to see lots of graphic accidents. Man'oh man, some of them are incredible! The disturbing part is that many of the injuries could have been avoided or significantly lessened by wearing the proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

I'm guilty of learning the hard way myself. I used to ride in shorts, T-shirt, and a "beanie" helmet. I'd cross the bridge into Iowa, toss the helmet into the ditch then retrieve it on the way back. Not any more, I've had several fairly hard "get offs" in the last six years — three to be exact. Seems the more I fall off, the better I dress.

Luckily, the first time I just happened to be dressed a little better than normal. My helmet was toast, my jeans were shredded and my hands were raw. After having my road rash scrubbed clean by the biggest, baddest, least friendly nurse they could find, I made the decision not to go through that again. Emergency rooms are not motorcycle-friendly and growing new skin is not a pleasant experience.

Still, some people refuse to learn and I hear all kinds of excuses for not wearing PPE when I talk to our folks. Most of those excuses just don't hold water. Here are some examples.

- **"It's too hot!"**

A good jacket, helmet and gloves will actually keep you cooler on really hot days. Hot air blowing over your exposed skin dehydrates you and raises, yes **raises**, your body temperature. Yes, if you get stopped in traffic your temperature will soon rise to an uncomfortable level, but as soon as you get moving you'll be all right. Trust me, heat rash is better than road rash.

- **"I can't feel the controls with gloves on!"**

Sure you can, you just have to get used to the different feel. Good leather gloves will improve your grip while protecting your hands from road debris. Have you ever had a rock or June bug whack you on the knuckle at 70 mph? Even more important, gloves offer good protection should you fall off your motorcycle. What's the first thing you do when you fall? — you put your hands out to catch yourself. I don't see people lining up to stick their palms on a grinder. The asphalt is no different.

- **"Riding a bike is supposed to be fun."**

Wearing safety gear doesn't have to decrease the fun factor — in fact, it can and should increase it. Suffering from sunburn, road rash, dehydration, hypothermia and flying road debris isn't fun. Wearing the right gear will reduce fatigue, increase comfort and protect you from the elements. Getting into the habit of wearing safety gear means you'll be able to spend more time having fun.

- **"I'm not gonna wear the orange 'I'm picking up garbage' vest!"**

Those vests aren't my style either, but the point is getting other motorists to see you. After a crash, the first thing out of the other guy's mouth often is, "I didn't even see him." When it comes to PPE, there are plenty of options available.

Many jackets are available in bright colors (yellow, white, or orange offer the best visibility) and have retro-reflective material incorporated into them. Vests are available in black with your choice of color for the reflective material. The important thing is to BE SEEN!!!

- **"They can't make me wear that!"**

Oh, really? Sure they can — the authority comes straight from DoDI 6055.4, **DoD Traffic Safety Program** and is reiterated in AFI 91-207, **U.S. Air Force Traffic Safety Program**. Failing to wear safety gear can result in disciplinary actions such as a



Letter Of Counseling, Letter Of Reprimand, an Article 15, or the loss of your driving privileges. The worst-case scenario would be a Line-of-Duty determination that would leave you paying your own medical bills if the injury is determined to be from non-use of PPE. Bottom line: You wear the uniform — you wear the gear. There is no disputing that wearing protective gear decreases injuries and reduces lost time from the work center.

There is a ton of motorcycle-specific safety gear available today, so riders are no longer restricted to a few choices that all look the same. There are many different styles of PPE available in materials ranging from leather to Cordura and Kevlar. These all offer great abrasion resistance and are often well vented. Many are fitted with hard armor and have reflective material designed into them. Stay away from the fashion leather and, instead, look for purpose-made motorcycle gear. You can still look "cool" and be very comfortable and safe at the same time.

I once saw a study comparing the abrasion resistance of blue jeans, Cordura and leather. At 50 mph it took less than three feet to burn through the denim, 20 feet for the Cordura, and a whopping 88 feet for the leather. Let's do some math here. A couple of years ago I hit the ground at about 45 mph and slid for almost 70 feet. I could smell the leather burning, but didn't get a scratch on me. Had I not been wearing the leathers, I'd have been taking a few weeks off from work trying to grow back the skin lost after the first few feet. I'd rather show off a scuffed jacket than scars.

So what's the lesson to be learned from this? It's simple — dress for the fall, not the ride.

## What's Required

There's been a lot of interest in motorcycle safety — a major portion of that being focused on the PPE that we, as Air Force members, must wear while operating our motorcycles. The PPE requirements for operating a motorcycle can be found in DoDI 6055.4 and AFI 91-207 and apply to the operator AND passenger. The following is a list of required PPE:

- Helmet certified to meet DOT standards (properly fastened under the chin).
- Eye protection (impact or shatter-resistant goggles or full-face shield properly attached to the helmet).
- Brightly colored vest or jacket which has reflective material for nighttime use. It must not be covered but be clearly visible.
- Long-sleeved shirt or jacket.
- Long pants.
- Full-fingered gloves or mittens designed for use on a motorcycle.
- Sturdy footwear. ■

**Short Circuits ...** continued from page 3

**2002 Oldsmobile Bravada, GMC Envoy, Chevrolet Trailblazer. Number Involved — 30,476. Defect:** On certain sport utility vehicles, under certain circumstances, the front lower control arm brackets may fracture. This fracture could result in the separation of the lower front control arm from the frame. A separation could result in loss of vehicle control, resulting in a crash. (NHTSA Recall No. 01V126, GM Recall No. 01034)

*Owners who do not receive a free remedy for these recall defects within a reasonable amount of time should call the following telephone numbers: Daimler/ Chrysler, 1-800-853-1403; Ford Motor Company, 1-800-392-3673; Chevrolet, 1-800-222-1020; Pontiac, 1-800-762-2737; Oldsmobile, 1-800-442-6537; Suzuki, 1-800-934-0934.*

## Consumer Product Safety Commission Recalls

**Century Multi-Use Strollers.** Century products Co., of Macedonia, Ohio, is voluntarily recalling about 650,000 "Take 2," "Travel Solutions," "Pioneer," "Travelite," and "Pro Sport" 4-in-1 strollers. These strollers can unexpectedly collapse or the car seat/carrier adaptor unexpectedly detach. When this happens, an infant or young child inside the stroller or an attached car seat/carrier can fall to the ground and suffer serious injuries.

Century has received 681 reports of accidents, including 250 injuries where the stroller unexpectedly collapsed or the car seat/carrier detached.

The model names for the recalled strollers can be found on the footrest, seat pad, legs of the frame, or on a white label on the side locks. The following is a list of the models and years of manufacture: "Take 2," 2000; "Travel Solutions," 1999-2000; "Pioneer," 1998-2000, "Travelite," 1997-1998; and "Pro Sport," 1996-1999.

Consumers should stop using these strollers and call Century toll-free at (800) 766-9998 to order a free repair kit. Consumers should have their strollers available when they call to help Century determine if they have one of the recalled models. Consumers can also log onto the company's website at [www.centuryproducts.com](http://www.centuryproducts.com) or write to Consumer Affairs, Century Products, Box 100, Elverson, Pa., 19520. ■



# Regular Car Care Keeps You Safe

Reprinted with permission from the *Automobile Club of Southern California*

**N**ow is the time to give your car a checkup, before cooler weather and the rainy season are here. By taking time to regularly check the condition of your vehicle, you improve the chances of avoiding a safety or security situation down the road. The Auto Club recommends that car owners perform five primary maintenance items during this time of year. They are:

**1.** Check all fluid levels, vehicle lights and belts and hoses. Refill, replace or adjust as necessary.

Modern rubber materials have made belts and hoses very durable with relatively long lives. Fortunately, neither belts nor hoses fail without warning — they deteriorate slowly over time. Regular inspections can allow you to plan for replacement before they fail.

When it comes to protecting your transmission from premature failure, it's important to check the owner's manual for the manufacturer's recommended fluid replacement schedule. Recent improvements in transmission fluid have dramatically increased its expected life and it can last for life in many new cars. But if you drive an older car, the fluid and filter most likely will require replacement every 30,000 to 100,000 miles.

**2.** Replace wiper blades if they are more than six months old.

Streaks or skipping on your vehicle's windshield are telltale signs of worn wiper blades. The rubber blade portion of the wiper is replaceable — either as a rubber refill or a complete blade assembly — and has a limited lifespan. The rubber blades are exposed to the ele-

ments and start to deteriorate as soon as they are installed. In fact, hot dry summer weather is harder on the wiper blades than a wet winter.

Take a look at the condition of the blades about once a month. Lift the wiper arm away from the windshield and look for wear on the edge of the blade. Check the rubber for brittle or cracked areas. In addition to inspecting the blades, operate the washer and wiper systems to see how well the wipers clear water from the windshield. Wiper blades often can look OK, but do a poor job of cleaning the windshield. To buy the correct replacements, you need to know the year, make and model of the vehicle, the length of the blade and the method by which the blade is attached to the wiper arm. It's often helpful to remove an old blade from the car and take it to a store to match with a new one.

**3.** Change the oil if it has been more than 7,000 miles since the last lubrication. Older vehicles require more frequent oil changes.

One of the most beneficial things you can do to extend the life of your vehicle is to change the motor oil regularly. But regularly doesn't mean "frequently." The old rule of thumb of changing the oil every 3,000 miles may not apply to today's advanced engines. Technologically improved lubricants are capable of lasting longer while still doing a good job of protecting your engine. Under normal driving conditions, the oil-change schedule can be extended to 7,500 miles, and several luxury imports can go as high as 20,000. The trick to determining the best oil-change schedule for your vehicle is understanding what kind of driving you do. Severe conditions may require you to change oil more frequently. Check



y o u r  
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**4.** Flush and refill engine coolant if it has been more than three years since the last coolant change.

Antifreeze contains additives that prevent corrosion in the cooling system. When these additives come to the end of their useful lives, wear and corrosion begin. Sediment builds up in the cooling system, causing a loss of cooling ability. Flushing is required for proper operation.

**5.** Inspect tires and check brakes if the vehicle has more than 30,000 miles on the odometer, or if it has been more than 30,000 miles since the last break job.

Your owner's manual will give specific recommendations about how often to rotate tires, but, as a rule, rotate between 6,000 and 7,500 miles.

Rotating tires provides an excellent

opportunity to carefully inspect them.

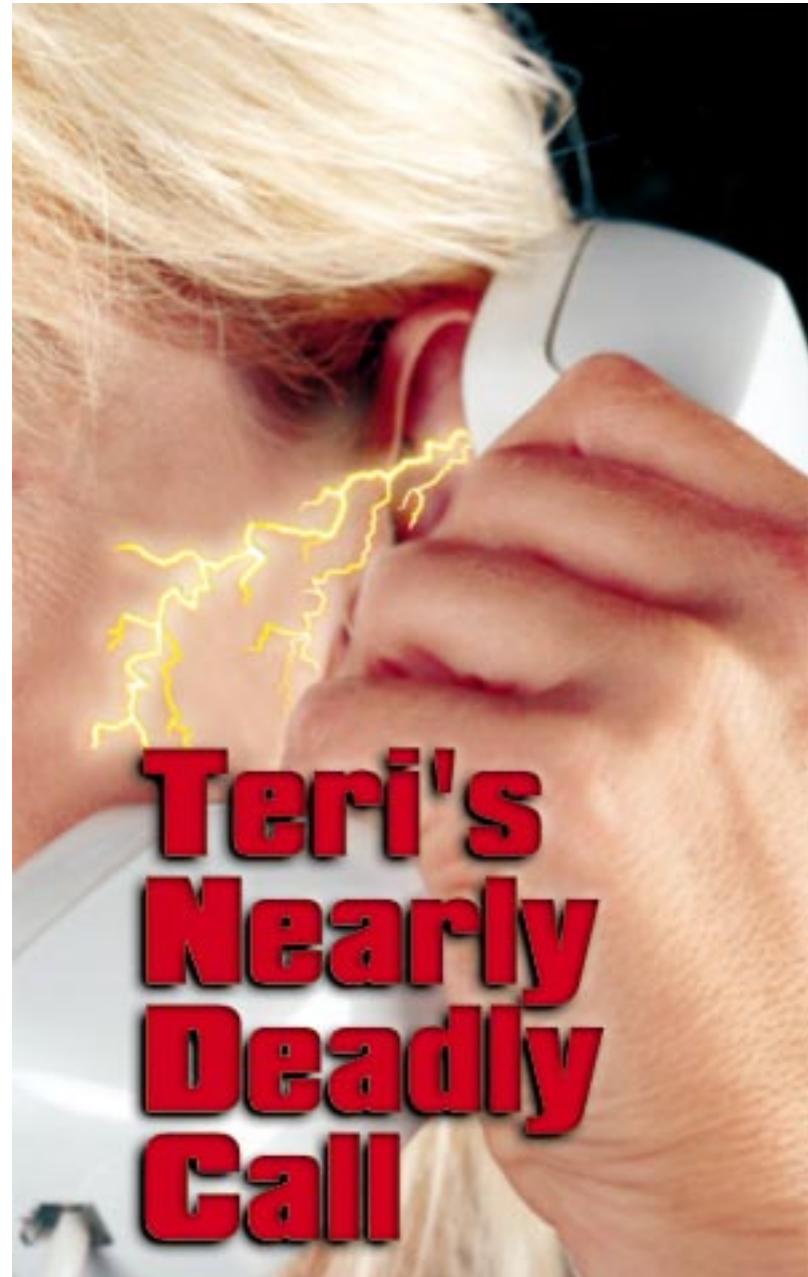
Uneven wear is a tip-off that the tires have been operated at the wrong inflation pressure. Certain tire wear patterns indicate that the suspension needs alignment or the tires are out of balance.

Brakes rarely fail suddenly, they deteriorate slowly with wear. Brake life depends on many factors, such as terrain, city vs. country travel, driving style and even climate.

Since there is no such thing as a regular brake replacement schedule, it's wise to have your brakes inspected regularly. Warning signs that brake repairs may be needed include strange sounds or feeling the steering wheel pull when you apply the brakes.

The brake inspection is an ideal time to check the brake fluid. An unusually low fluid level indicates a leak, but the possibility of contamination is just as serious. Contamination causes corrosion, which eventually leads to other brake problems. Brake fluid should be clear to amber colored. A sure sign of contamination is a darkening of the fluid to a tea or coffee color.

Brake fluid absorbs moisture, so water contamination is common in areas with high humidity. ■



# Teri's Nearly Deadly Call

BOB VAN ELSBERG  
Managing Editor

***You pick up the phone. Just then the sky explodes with light, followed by a wall-shaking boom. For a moment you pause, wondering if you should hang up. But you think, "I've been on the phone in the past during lightning and nothing's ever happened — I'm not in any 'real' danger." So you keep on dialing, not realizing that all you've really been in the past is "lucky." That is, until your luck runs out.***

**T**he new millennium was not quite three days old when Emergency Room (ER) Nurse Teri Grody got into her car to drive to the Wright-Patterson AFB hospital for her 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. shift. Although Y2K had passed quietly enough, the same couldn't be said for the weather that night. January was supposed to be winter — but you couldn't tell that from the mid-60s temperatures that warmed the day, nor

could you tell it from the sky that night. Instead of soft, white snowflakes drifting down, brilliant lightning flashed across the sky.

"The lightning was so bad it lit up the whole sky," Teri said. You could see the road without using your headlights. It was very intense."

She arrived at the hospital at 6:45 p.m., early enough to allow her 15 minutes to get a status report from the outgoing shift. The prognosis, they told her, was for a busy night. Anticipating a heavy patient load, Teri decided to call the Intensive Care Unit to check on the number of beds available. Stepping into the ER break room, she lifted the phone off the wall-mounted unit, just to the left of the entrance door. A TV sat on a stand, just below the phone. Teri leaned against the TV and rested her left elbow on top as she listened to the dial tone. It was a call she would never finish.

"On the second ring I felt as if someone had taken a sledgehammer and hit me right in the chin as hard as they could," she said. "Then I heard the big boom outside."

At that instant, a bolt of lightning found its way to Teri's phone line, sending a powerful electrical charge into Teri's jaw. The shock caused her muscles to contract violently. Unable to release the phone, her jaw clamped shut brutally as the charge entered her left cheek, then flashed out of her left side into the TV. It was over in an instant. Amazingly, she was still standing — but the shock had emptied her lungs of air.

"After I took a deep breath, I hung up the phone. I felt a very intense shocking pain and tingling up the left side of my jaw." The pain, she said, "was like when your foot goes to sleep, then starts getting that 'pin-prickling' feeling as it wakes up."

Teri walked the short distance to the ER and told the doctor what had happened. To look at her, she seemed to have suffered minimal injuries. Her skin was red where the electricity had entered and exited her body. Her jaw hurt, but the doctor told her he felt the pain would pass. It seemed as if Teri had survived her close brush with death almost unscathed. Even as she discussed the incident, she was thinking about the incoming patients. The hospital served a large retiree population. These older patients often came in suffering from heart trouble — an area where Teri had special training. Being the only ER nurse at the hospital that night, she chose to stay on duty, fighting her own pain with Tylenol and Motrin.

However, the pain wouldn't go away. The muscles in Teri's jaw ached as if they'd been through a hard workout. By morning, the pain had spread to her neck and chest. Having clenched her jaw so tightly, she worried that she might have damaged her teeth. So she went to see her dentist.

"He didn't see any burns, but he told me to see a neurologist," she said, explaining that he suspected

there was nerve damage. The lightning, he said, had entered her jaw at the point where a number of nerves ran. "He knew there was nerve involvement and there was no way that he should be working on my teeth."

Resting as best she could that day, Teri went back to work that night. By 3:00 a.m., she could no longer take the pain. She also had another, even greater concern. A few hours after the accident, she'd noticed her heart seemed to be skipping beats. When Teri told the ER doctor that night, he immediately scheduled her for an EKG.

Doing that EKG was very important. Most lightning strike victims die from heart problems, so Teri's symptoms were a serious concern. Fortunately, her irregular heartbeat wasn't life threatening and, in time, went away on its own. What didn't go away was the pain in her jaw, which neither Tylenol nor Motrin could relieve. Teri began taking powerful prescription drugs for the pain. But the medication had its own complications.

"They didn't want me to work with the medication I was taking," she said. The medication, Teri explained, was affecting her short-term memory, making it difficult to remember what to do next. However, she wasn't about to give up easily. Struggling against her pain and the debilitating effects of the medication, she worked off-and-on, using much of her sick leave in the process. Her coworkers saw her struggle, and reached out to her.

"The ER doctors were trying really hard to help me. I saw my civilian doctor, but by the second visit he said he didn't know what to do for me," she said.

Teri then went to a neurosurgeon who tried to block the pain in the damaged nerves. The surgeon inserted a needle through Teri's left cheek and

angled the needle as far back along the nerve's path as possible. He then injected the area with Novocain. The block worked, but only temporarily. Something more permanent was needed. But what he proposed was drastic.

"He wanted to do a second procedure of going back and burning those nerves," Teri explained. The downside was severe. "I would be paralyzed on the left side of my face," she said.

Faced with such a radical, life-changing surgery, Teri visited a maxillofacial surgeon in hope of finding a less drastic answer to her problems. As he examined her, he found another possible cause for her pain. He found evidence that a disc at the joint where her skull and left jaw met had been dislocated, tearing nearby muscles and tendons. Most important, he could offer Teri hope. Surgery was possible, he explained. Using some of her abdominal tissue, he could repair the damaged disc and protect the injured nerve. Now there was light at the end of the tunnel — hope that the pain would eventually come to an end.

Teri's life has never been the same since the accident. Before that night, she — like so many others — believed lightning couldn't harm her inside a building. But since that January night, her life has been changed in a way she hopes others will never have to endure. She explained that some very simple measures can go a long way in protecting people from becoming lightning strike victims.

"Turn off any computers or TVs — any electrical appliance." She added, "You don't want to take a shower, go to the bathroom, wash the dishes or do anything around water ... Don't ever assume you are protected from everything — because you're not." ■

## When You See Lightning

***Here are some tips from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other safety organizations to help keep you from being a lightning strike victim:***

### **If Indoors —**

- Do not handle any electrical equipment or telephones because lightning could follow the wire. Television sets are particularly dangerous at this time.
- Avoid bathtubs, water faucets, and sinks because metal pipes can transmit electricity.
- Stay away from open doors and windows, fireplaces, and all metal objects. Golf cleats are dangerous lightning conductors.

### **If Outdoors —**

- Attempt to get into a building or car. Make sure you roll up the car's windows.

- Avoid tall structures such as towers, fences, telephone poles or power poles.

• Stay away from natural lightning rods such as golf clubs, tractors, fishing rods, bicycles or camping equipment. Stay away from rivers, lakes and other bodies of water. If you are boating, immediately go to shore and get out of the boat.

• If you are isolated in a level field or prairie and you feel your hair stand on end (which indicates that lightning is about to strike) bend forward (and put your hands on your knees). As an alternative, the National Lightning Safety Institute recommends that you place your hands over your ears to protect your hearing from being damaged by thunder. It is recommended that you crouch and put your feet together and remove all metal objects. Do not lie flat on the ground. Keep twice as far away from nearby trees as they are high.

- In a forest, find a low area under a thick growth of small trees. ■



Illustration by Felicia Moreland

**Don't Let a  
Confined  
Space  
Get You  
in a Jam!**

**T**he day started off just like any other — we had roll call and my boss gave out the jobs. However, today mine was a little "different." I was told to go down into the sewer main and look for cracks in the line. To me, it was no big thing. After all, what's in a sewer besides the obvious? So, I went off all by myself with no worries at all.

When I arrived at the location, I removed the lid and put in the ladder. Boy, did that sewer smell! I climbed down the ladder with my flashlight in tow and began to look around for cracks. After a few moments, the odor began to really bother me — but I knew my boss really wanted this task completed. However, I suddenly started having trouble breathing so I started heading back toward my ladder. By the time I got out of the hole, I was exhausted. It was lucky for me that someone saw me crawl out of the hole and collapse onto the ground.

The next thing I knew I was in a hospital emergency room with people standing around me talking about how lucky I was to be alive. After I was released from the hospital, I met with my unit safety representative. That's when I learned I was supposed to be trained in confined spaces before entering one! If I had only known! My lack of training about working in confined spaces almost cost me my life.

While this story is fictional, it is very much like what happens in real life. So ask yourself, "If something like this happened to me or someone working for me, would I know what to do?" If the answer is "no," read on because the answers to that question and others will be addressed in this article.

### What Is a Confined Space?

A confined space is one that is large enough and has been designed so that a person can enter and work. It has a limited or restricted means of getting in and out and is not intended for someone to remain in for an indefinite period of time. There are two types of confined spaces — **permit-required** and **non-permit**. Many of us work in confined spaces that do not require permits. These spaces do not contain, nor do they have the potential to contain, any atmospheric hazards or any other serious safety hazards. Typical examples may include fuel tank dikes without fixed stairs, certain aircraft dry bays, facility crawl spaces, communication manholes, vaults, barri-

ers, and aircraft wheel wells.

Obviously, the Confined Space Program focuses on spaces where permits are required. These spaces are ones that contain or could contain a hazardous atmosphere or a material that could engulf the worker. Confined spaces may also have inwardly converging walls or floors that slope downward and taper to a smaller cross-section that could trap a worker. Some examples include above-ground fuel tanks, aircraft fuel cells, refueler pits and trucks, lift stations, chemical tanks and tank rail cars.

### Tips For Safety

If you realize that you or your workers must work in a confined space, here are some helpful safety tips.

First, find out who is on your Confined Space Program Team (CSPT). Team members normally include people from Safety, Fire, Bioenvironmental Engineering, and functional managers. Your installation's CSPT will set the confined space program policy for your base.

Second, get training. Before a person can enter one of these areas they must receive training from their unit confined space training person. The training plan must be coordinated through the Ground Safety office, Civil Engineer Fire Protection Flight, and Bioenvironmental Engineering before it's used and whenever there are changes. The entry supervisor will verify the training of each person who is authorized to enter confined spaces to perform work, or those who are assigned as attendants, rescue personnel, or monitors.

Finally, know what to do if someone has an emergency in a confined space. Keep a level head and don't try to rescue them by yourself. Normally, you won't be any better prepared for the dangers than they were, so contact the base fire department to perform the emergency rescue.

Confined spaces can present unique challenges to your work environment. Knowing what they are and how to tackle their challenges is the first step to a successful and safe program. Hundreds of people die every year in confined spaces in the United States. Don't let your lack of knowledge about confined spaces cramp your day.

### Read The Regs

The Air Force implemented its Confined Space Program back in February 1990. The current standards governing this program are listed in Air Force Occupational Safety and Health Standard 91-25, **Confined Spaces**, and OSHA Standard 1910.146, **Permit-Required Confined Spaces**. Although the classification of confined spaces has changed, the majority of the program has remained the same. ■



## Keep Your Cool After the Crash!

**BOB VAN ELSBERG**  
Managing Editor

**F**or once I was early for a doctor's appointment. I took a certain satisfaction in that as I sat in the waiting room reading a book and waiting to be called. Perhaps 10 minutes had passed when the loud speaker announced, "Will the owner of a black Chevrolet license number ... please come to the front desk?"

"Hmmm ... I'll bet they left their lights on," I thought as I sat there, momentarily distracted from my book. Then the loud speaker announced, "Will the owner of a blue Toyota pickup truck, license number 677 JBK, please come to the front counter?" That caught my attention. While my Toyota is dark gray — not blue, 677 JBK was definitely MY license number.

"Darn," I thought, "I'll bet I left my lights on, too."

I walked to the front desk, caught the attention of one of the receptionists, and said, "I'm the owner of the Toyota pick-

up." She paused, then looked at me and answered, "Sir, your vehicle has been hit in the parking lot."

"Oh, no!" I thought. I had just had my truck repainted and today was my 25th wedding anniversary. This was supposed to be a good day. The LAST thing I wanted to do was to go out and see my vehicle "customized by crash." This was WAY beyond leaving the headlights on.

As I walked out the front door into the parking lot, I dreaded what I would see. Looking toward where my truck was parked, I saw a blue Plymouth Acclaim stopped sideways behind my pickup. The woman who'd been driving the car looked pretty shook-up. As she saw me approach, I looked at her and said, "Ma'am, I'm the owner of the pickup."

"I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to hit you," she said with a voice that was almost pleading. I could see how distraught she was, so I kept calm and responded, "Well, let's take a look and see just what damage has been done."

We walked around the back of her car to look at my pickup. I looked and saw a long paint-smear dent in my back bumper and another higher up in my

tailgate. I was relieved. By incredible luck she had hit the only parts of my truck that hadn't been repainted back in June. I looked at her and said, "Ma'am, it's alright. If we had to have an accident, this is the best one we could have." She looked at me with surprise.

I went on to explain. "I just had my truck repainted and couldn't afford to do the tailgate and back bumper. Now at least it'll be taken care of by the insurance." She looked relieved. At least I wasn't going to blow up at her.

We walked to the side of my truck, pulled out our insurance papers and exchanged the necessary information. Moments later, Officer M.R. Montoya of the Belen, N.M., police department arrived. He took our driver's licenses and insurance cards, then listened to her explanation of the accident as he filled out the report. Everything was going smoothly until the driver of the black Chevy, parked to my left in the lot, came out and saw the accident.

"He's going to kill me!" she yelled several times, explaining she'd borrowed the car from a friend. I looked at the car. After hitting my truck, the Acclaim had nailed the Chevy's right rear fender hard enough to push the back of the car about three feet to the left. Worse yet, the car looked like an older model — one in the process of being restored. Its driver was really upset.

"He's going to kill me when he sees this," she screamed several times again. The lady who had driven the blue car explained, "No, he won't, it was MY fault, I caused the accident."

I stood off to the side, not saying a thing as the driver of the black car became increasingly agitated. Just when I thought she was about to achieve lift-off, I heard Officer Montoya speak, "Ma'am, if you don't calm down I'm going to arrest you and take you downtown and put you in jail!"

Whew — that got her attention! Even though she was still agitated, the thought of a trip to jail caused her to cool her jets. Obviously, her day COULD get worse.

This confrontation also got my attention. I have been in a few accidents and also have been a witness to several others. However, this was the first time I'd ever seen one of the **victims** almost get hauled off to jail because of a bad temper.

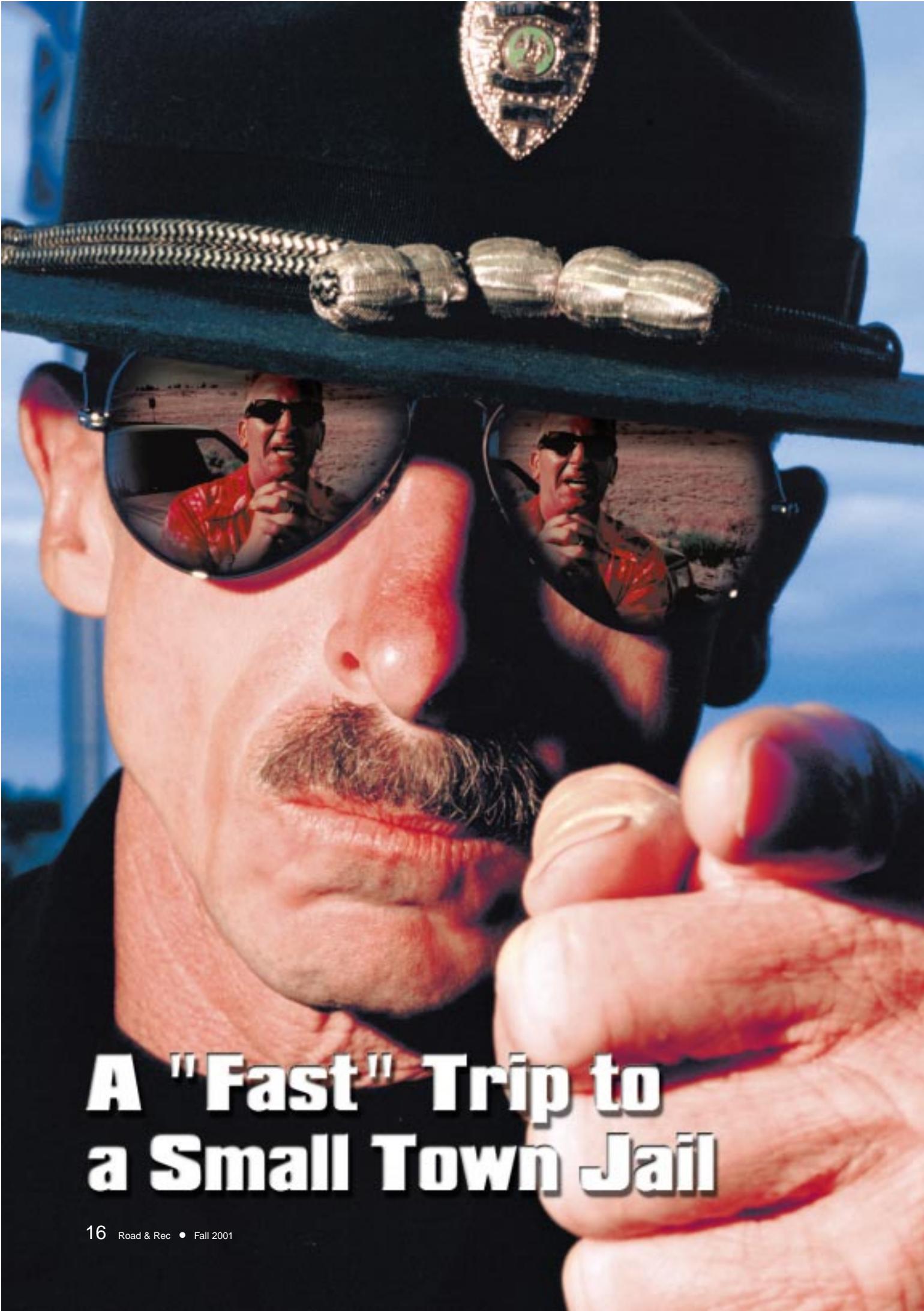
Obviously, being a victim is no excuse for losing your cool at the scene of an accident. Indeed, blowing your top — even if you are the victim — can have some unpleasant consequences, according to Patrol Officer B. Harden, also of the Belen Police Department. She has some valuable and direct suggestions for folks who let their tempers flare at an accident scene.

She explained, "You can be arrested for either interfering with an officer or for disorderly conduct. Which charge you face depends on what the officer is doing at the moment. If the officer is interviewing people at the accident and writing the report, you're interfering with that officer's duty. If it happens after the officer has filled out the report, then you can be charged with disorderly conduct." She explained that either charge could earn you a free trip in a police car to a place you don't want to go. "If you're arrested, you'll be brought to the police department and booked on a petty misdemeanor charge," she said.

And, unlike Monopoly, the police don't issue "Get Out of Jail Free" cards. She explained that for about \$100, you can bond-out and avoid the creature comforts of your local jail. That is, she added, unless you'd prefer to stay and enjoy correctional custody "cuisine" while waiting for your arraignment.

Following an unpleasant event — like being in an accident — with jail time is not a good way to end the day. To avoid that, Officer Harden offered the following advice. "People should act calm and rationally," she said. "That's the easiest way for us to get all of the information from both parties and to get the accident cleared-up."

That's not bad advice for folks who wind up being the victim of a fender-bender. Having looked at hundreds of accident reports during the past five years, it's clear that a big chunk of them were caused by the "other" driver. Clearly, we are as likely as anyone to end up the victim of someone else's driving mistake. If you're one of the unlucky ones, it's important to keep your anger in-check, cooperate with law enforcement, and remember that, someday, YOU may be at-fault. No one likes being in an accident. So, why make things worse by losing your cool — and maybe your freedom — afterwards? ■



# A "Fast" Trip to a Small Town Jail

**P**ass the turkey, stuffing, cranberry sauce. How about some pumpkin pie? Or maybe a speedy trip ... to jail?

Many airmen spent November 23 last year with friends or family celebrating Thanksgiving. With the four-day weekend many set out on a nice road trip. I was no different.

Thanksgiving weekend is one of the busiest travel times of the year. Highway patrol officers are constantly on the lookout for reckless drivers — speeders, people driving under the influence, or people who just shouldn't be driving due to exhaustion.

After a great Thanksgiving Day with my family, I decided to cut my trip short to bring my friends at Hill — the ones who couldn't get away — leftover pumpkin pie and some other fattening goodies.

Four hours into my trip back to Hill, in the cold desert of Nevada, I was pulled over for speeding. Yes, I was going fast, but it was an open straightaway in the middle of nowhere. "I'll accept the consequences for my actions and pay for the ticket." At least, that's what I thought at the time.

Before I knew it, another vehicle, this one from the local sheriff's station, pulled up behind the Nevada Highway Patrol car. Within minutes I found myself handcuffed and sitting in a sheriff's vehicle on my way to the local jail.

"How could I be going to jail?" I asked myself. "I was just speeding! Okay, I was speeding a lot, but still I was just speeding! I still have another six hours to go — what time am I going to make it out of here now?"

Within 20 minutes after arriving at the sheriff's station, I was booked, all my personal items were taken — with the exception of my socks — and I was now looking like a character in a jail movie of the black-and-white film era.

With my new wardrobe, I was also issued two blankets, a towel, a Styrofoam® cup with a toothbrush, toothpaste, soap and a spoon. I was then shown to my new residence until I would be released.

"It's Friday," I thought. "Will I be able to get back to work by Monday?" Every emergency number I had was sitting in the console of my car, and who knew where it was now.

Long, enlightening conversations with other inmates led me to believe I would not be released before Monday.

In the cold, damp cell I lay and pondered. "If

ONLY I had set the cruise control. Now I'm going to be AWOL. Why did I have to leave early — my friends wouldn't have cared. Is the pumpkin pie spoiling in my car?" Needless to say, sleeping was a chore.

In the morning, I filled out a kite, a little piece of paper used to communicate with the deputies on duty. I asked what the odds were of seeing the judge that day. I slid the eight-inch by three-inch paper into the door crack and watched the deputy take it, then waited for him to get back to me. After what seemed like hours of waiting and seeing that all my fellow co-inhabitants had gone back to sleep, I decided I might as well, too.

Again, I tossed and turned, "This is the worst Thanksgiving ever," I thought. "How could I be so stupid?!"

There were no clocks in the jail, so I had no idea if it was 6:00 a.m. or 11:00 a.m. A minute seemed like 15. Fifteen minutes seemed like an hour. By noon, the desk sergeant called me out of my cell. Luckily, the sheriffs sympathized with my situation, being in the military and all. Many of them were prior service themselves. They were able to get the judge to come in that day and review my case.

After what seemed like endless paperwork, the judge released me on my own recognizance. "I can make it back by Monday," sprang to mind. Little did I know, being released was just the first obstacle I'd have to overcome.

My car had been towed and impounded. I needed \$129 to get it out of the impound lot. That wasn't too bad, but all I had was \$80. That was the gas money I was using to get home, still six hours away.

Shooting the breeze with the tow truck driver proved to be a dead end. Though the gentleman's Rottweiler took a liking to me, the driver just couldn't help me out with the cost. He had been scammed one too many times to feel that I would be any different. My word wasn't good enough. I understood how he would have reservations about trusting someone who just got out of jail to send him the money.

Now it's about 6:00 p.m. on Saturday. I'm \$40 short of getting my car out of impound. I missed lunch because I was being processed out and now I'm hungry and I'm freezing without a jacket. All because I felt the need to "open-it-up" on the highway.

I headed back to the sheriff's station to see if they had any ideas. I told them I'd sell them pumpkin bread, my compact discs in the car, my bag of clothes — anything to get another \$60.

Though the desk sergeant was sympathetic to my dilemma, it would have been a conflict of interest for him to help me out himself. But the officers at the sheriff's office did one better. In a



small town like the one I was in, everybody knows everybody. I never thought that would work in my favor.

Hearing that I'd be willing to sell my CDs, one of the gentlemen working behind the control desk called the town disc jockey, informed him of my situation and asked if he could lend me the money and hold my CDs as collateral. To my surprise, the voice on the other end of the line said he didn't need the CDs — he'd lend the money to me. (I found out later it was because I was an airman that he lent me the money.)

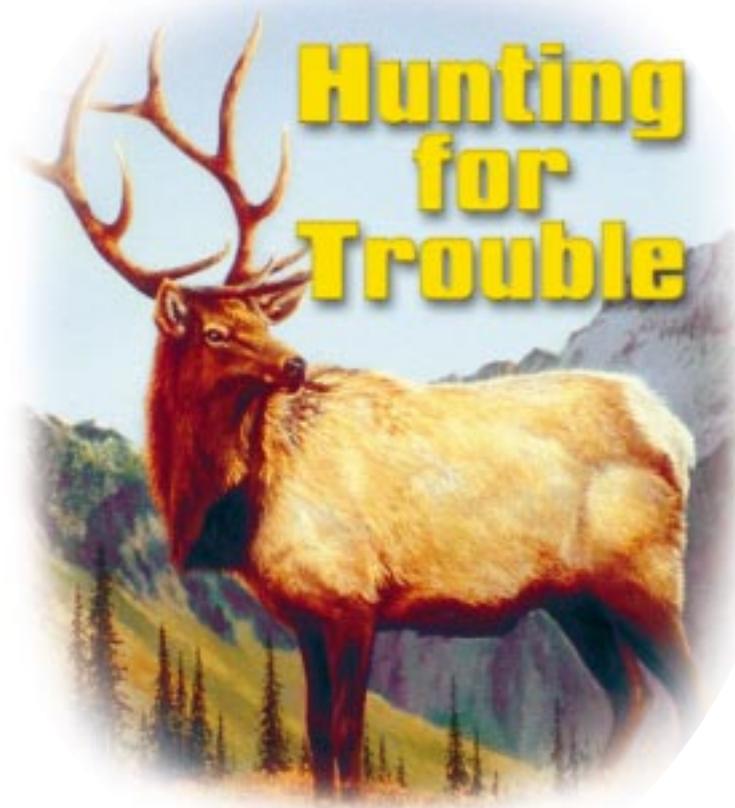
Now with my car out of impound, I had 500 miles to go, a half-tank of gas and \$10 to my name. I couldn't make it. Once again the sheriffs came to the rescue. With a gas pump in the back of the station, the sheriffs were authorized to give me seven gallons of gas. That would at least get me a couple hours down the road. They also told me that I could stop in every good-sized town on the way back to Hill and receive similar

help from the local sheriff's station. I began the drive back, keeping the sheriff's advice in mind.

Coming up on 10:00 p.m., I noticed my tank was half empty. I remembered the town I was coming up to was one where the sheriff had told me to stop for more gas. I received a voucher for five gallons of gas. With that, I headed up to the local gas station, gave them the voucher and my last \$10, and said, "Put in as much as you can." It would be enough to get me home.

For the next several hours, I was glued to my seat as I drove within the speed limit and thought about my weekend. I couldn't believe how lucky I was to have met the people I did. I wish it had been under different circumstances.

I thought speeding would get me back fast, but it landed me in jail a lot faster. As it turned out, I didn't get back to Hill until Monday at 3:00 a.m. — but that was better than being AWOL — or not arriving at all. I should have started the trip with that attitude. ■



Courtesy of *Safety Times*

**A** severe case of “buck fever” is not the worst thing that can happen to a hunter. John was hunting alone on a cold November day. His long-time goal was to kill a large deer which he could display as a trophy. On this day, he found that buck and downed it. He then had to drag it a long distance to the car. As he was tying the deer to the hood of the car, he collapsed. He died several days later from a stroke.

John is not the first hunter to die in the fields from something other than an errant gunshot. Heart attacks are common and often result from hunters like John placing too much physical stress on a system which is frequently unprepared for the challenge. One year in New York six hunters died of heart attacks on opening day.

### Get In Shape

Before the season starts, have a checkup and establish a workout regimen that includes stretching and endurance exercises. It is advisable to start such a program six to 10 weeks before you begin hunting. Before you initiate any new strenuous program, consult your physician and advise him of your planned hunting activities.

### Dress Properly

Extreme weather conditions make it harder for

your body to maintain a normal temperature. That causes more work for the heart and circulatory system. To protect yourself from the dangers outside your body:

- Wear clothing that provides a layer of insulation for warmth, is thick enough to absorb perspiration, and is designed to shed rain and cut the wind.
- Dress in layers. As you feel your body start to heat up, remove an outer garment. When you cool down, add layers. Strive for maximum comfort.
- Always wear a hat. It will block the sun to help you see and prevent important heat from leaving your body.

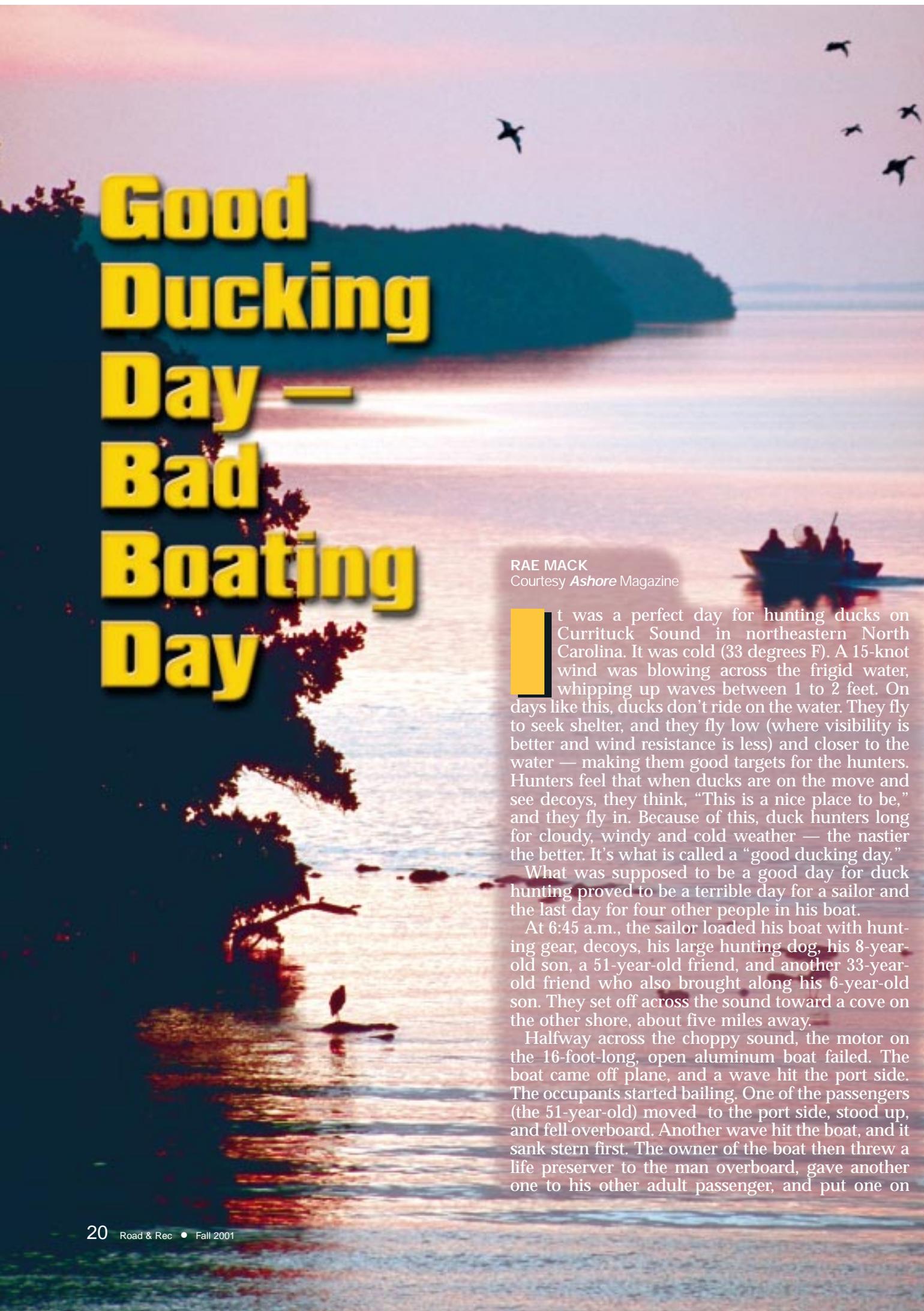
### Stay High And Dry

Many hunts require getting from one place to another by water, or in the case of duck hunting, being on the water to hunt.

- Do not overload a boat. Stay within the capacity required for that boat. If you have to make two trips, it's a small price to pay to avoid falling into frigid water. Or, get a bigger boat.
- Walk and move cautiously in a boat. Keep your center of gravity low. Walk one step at a time, hold onto something stationary. Do not stand up or lean over the side of a boat.
- Wear a personal flotation device (PFD) when you are on the water. It's a must.
- If you fall into cold water, dry off immediately. Don't let the cold seep into your system. You risk hypothermia, which is a dangerous cooling of the body.
- Carry a change of clothing in a waterproof container.

### Don't Be A Target

- To reduce the chance of being injured by another hunter, sit at the base of a tree trunk which is wider than your body. This way you can see an approaching hunter and you are protected from the rear.
- Never wave, whistle, or make animal calls to alert an approaching hunter to your presence.
- Never assume you are the only hunter in the area. Better to assume every sound or movement is another hunter until you can safely identify it as otherwise.
- Always wear fluorescent or “hunter orange” coloring when you are moving through the timber, even if it is not required by state law.
- Have a plan to carry heavy game to the car or truck.
- If you use a tree platform, be sure it is secured. Wear a shoulder harness with a safety belt attached to the tree.
- Take a cellular phone for emergencies.
- When hunting in an unfamiliar area, use a topographical map and carry a compass. They could help you avoid getting lost or getting into dangerous circumstances. ■



# Good Ducking Day — Bad Boating Day

RAE MACK  
Courtesy *Ashore Magazine*

It was a perfect day for hunting ducks on Currituck Sound in northeastern North Carolina. It was cold (33 degrees F). A 15-knot wind was blowing across the frigid water, whipping up waves between 1 to 2 feet. On days like this, ducks don't ride on the water. They fly to seek shelter, and they fly low (where visibility is better and wind resistance is less) and closer to the water — making them good targets for the hunters. Hunters feel that when ducks are on the move and see decoys, they think, "This is a nice place to be," and they fly in. Because of this, duck hunters long for cloudy, windy and cold weather — the nastier the better. It's what is called a "good ducking day."

What was supposed to be a good day for duck hunting proved to be a terrible day for a sailor and the last day for four other people in his boat.

At 6:45 a.m., the sailor loaded his boat with hunting gear, decoys, his large hunting dog, his 8-year-old son, a 51-year-old friend, and another 33-year-old friend who also brought along his 6-year-old son. They set off across the sound toward a cove on the other shore, about five miles away.

Halfway across the choppy sound, the motor on the 16-foot-long, open aluminum boat failed. The boat came off plane, and a wave hit the port side. The occupants started bailing. One of the passengers (the 51-year-old) moved to the port side, stood up, and fell overboard. Another wave hit the boat, and it sank stern first. The owner of the boat then threw a life preserver to the man overboard, gave another one to his other adult passenger, and put one on

himself. (The children were already wearing PFDs.)

By this time, the man who had fallen overboard disappeared under the water. The only thing visible was the floating life preserver. The dog and one of the children (the 6-year-old) were floating away from the boat in rough water. With only the boat's bow above water, the sailor held onto his son and his 33-year-old friend while they waited for another boat to come by. But none came. After 90 minutes, his son died from hypothermia. The father emptied gas cans and tied them and a buoy to his son's body so rescuers would be able to locate him. Then the boy drifted away. When his 33-year-old friend died a short time later, the sailor tied decoys to him also. Then he continued waiting — now alone.

When it got dark and the group hadn't returned home, one of the wives called the Coast Guard and reported them overdue. "We got the call at 1845," said BM1 (Boatswain's Mate First Class) William Midgett, of the Coast Guard station at Elizabeth City, N.C. He, SA (Seaman Apprentice) Matt Weaver and SN (Seaman) David Donohue set out on a search-and-rescue mission.

"We didn't know what we would find," said Midgett. "Without special gear like our Mustang suits, survival time in water that cold is usually under three hours."

To reach the area of the sound where the boat went down, the Coast Guardsmen had to haul their boat by trailer to the same boat landing where the ill-fated group of hunters had put in the water. Then, because their boat is larger than the 16-footer the hunters were in, they couldn't take a short cut through a narrow and shallow canal to the sound. Instead, they had to travel in deeper water around a peninsula. It was almost 7:30 p.m. when they reached the area where the boat had gone down and started searching. Their only light was the piercing beam of the search lights. Finally, they found what they were looking for.

"We were surprised to find this guy alive after being in the water for almost 14 hours. According to everything written, he shouldn't have survived," said Midgett.

A Coast Guard helicopter airlifted the survivor to a hospital, where he was treated for hypothermia. "He was shivering, but wasn't even frostbitten," said MK3 (Force Manager Third Class) Keith Conley, USCG, who went to the hospital to question the survivor. "He stayed in the hospital for only a few hours, then was able to leave on his own."

Why would one survive when others didn't? The answer to that question can be partly found in the clothing worn by the hunters. The survivor was wearing waist-high waders made of neoprene, which protected him from the frigid water. The other hunters weren't so prepared.

The man who first disappeared was wearing rubber waders, which undoubtedly filled with water

and dragged him below the surface. Also, according to his brother, he always had his pockets full of ammunition when he went hunting. The other hunter and the two children were dressed in winter clothing, but nothing that would protect them from being immersed in such cold water.

You may wonder even more why five people (two of them young children and one a middle-aged man who recently had undergone open-heart surgery) would get into a poorly maintained 20-year-old aluminum boat, along with a large dog, hunting equipment and decoys with weights attached. Then they further weighed down the boat by tying tree boughs to it for camouflage and set out on the sound despite the strong winds. The duck hunting may be great in such weather, but is the sport worth the risk? That's where personal risk assessment comes into play. Each adult in that boat had the responsibility for weighing the risks, taking them into consideration, and making the decision to go on this hunting trip.

Not only was the boat overloaded, but according to a hunting guide who helped pull the submerged boat out of the water, it wasn't seaworthy. Stewart Walker, who guides hunting parties on the sound, said, "That boat didn't have any braces. It would twist if you stood up and walked around on it. Also, it had a quarter-inch crack down the middle that had been patched with roofing tar."

Midgett, a native of the area whose relatives are watermen, said, "When you depend on the water for your livelihood, sometimes you have to take risks in order to make a living. But when you're going out for pleasure, you don't. I've been on the water in rough weather many times, including that day, because it was my job. But I would never take my kids out on a day like that. The adults had a choice; the children didn't."

No matter what we do, we have to make risk decisions. The difference between a foolhardy act and a well-planned one is what that decision is based upon. Weigh the risks in all aspects of your life, whether it is a quick process, "Do I risk making it across the road in front of that oncoming car?" or a more lengthy one — "Considering the weather, seaworthiness of my boat, and the condition of my passengers, do I have the emergency equipment I'll need if my engine conks out or if the boat sinks?"

This tragedy has forever altered the lives of three families. Wives are widowed, mothers weep for lost sons, and a father is left to grieve and wonder, "What if ...?" for the rest of his life. We don't want this to happen to you. ■

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*[Note: Search teams recovered the bodies of the two children and one of the adults the next day. The older man's body was found by two fishermen more than a month later. It was about four miles from where the boat sank. — Ed.]*

# How Safe Are You in That Tree Stand?

TSGT MATT CALBREATH  
509 BW SAFETY OFFICE  
Whiteman AFB MO

**Editor's Note:** On average 10 hunters die and 60 are crippled annually in tree stand-related accidents, making this a serious safety concern during hunting season.

**W**ery few hunters view their tree stand as a threat to their general well-being. Most have the attitude, "It won't happen to me, I'll be more careful than that," or "Man! — that person just wasn't paying attention." The truth of the matter is that if you're not taking appropriate measures to protect yourself in your tree stand, "it" can happen to you.

A reader's survey conducted by "Deer & Deer Hunter" magazine found that one of every three hunters has fallen from a tree stand. The bottom line in most of these mishaps was that the hunters weren't wearing safety straps. During the past five years, I have personally known one airman who fell from his tree stand and I've written mishap reports on two others. The airman I knew was paralyzed below the waist and given a medical discharge. He was in his mid-20s, married, and his wife was expecting.

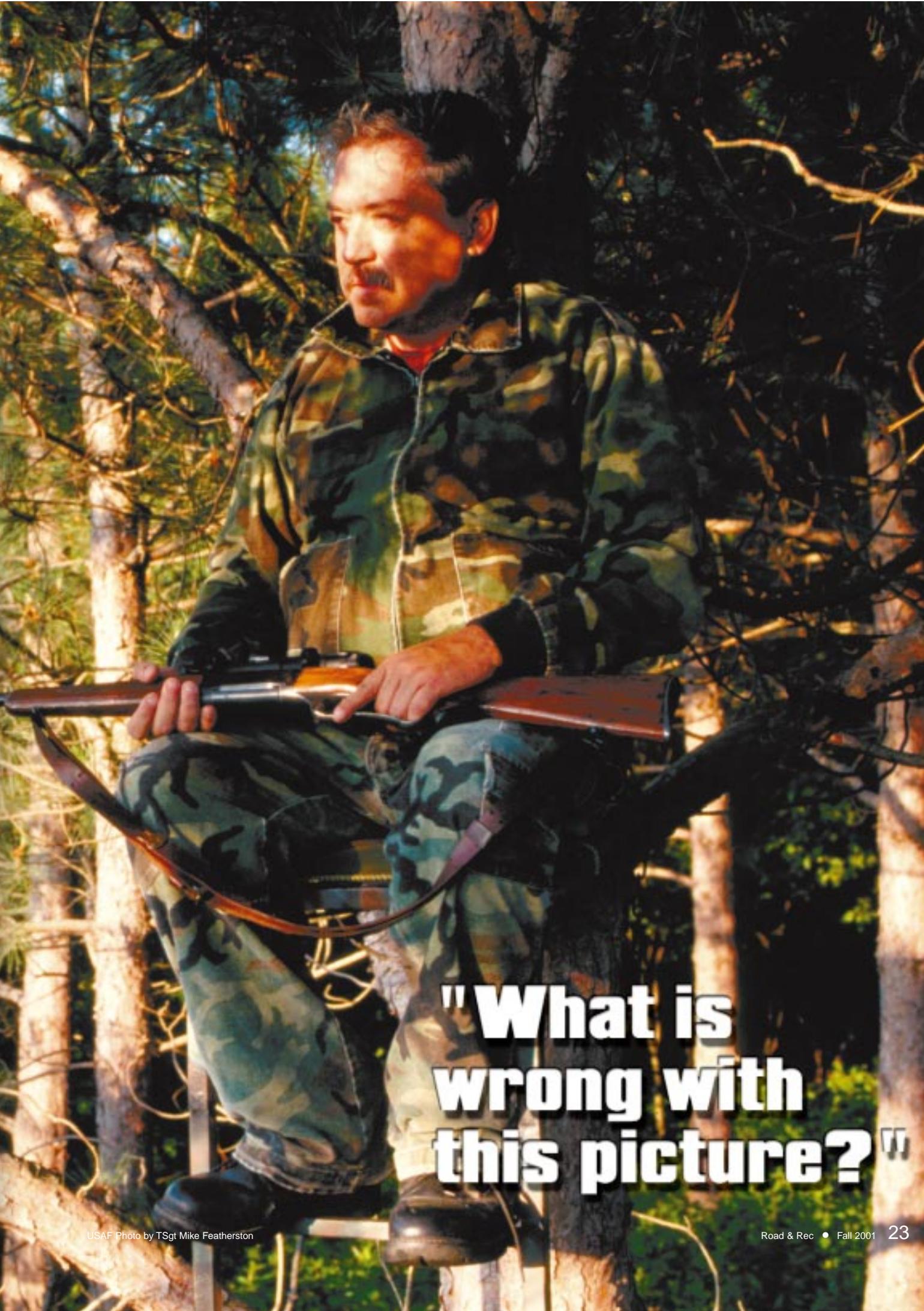
During the fall hunting season last year, a Minnesota couple was sharing a tree stand when it collapsed (stands are normally rated to support only 200-300 pounds) and sent them both falling to the ground. The woman died from her injuries a couple of days later. What a sad way for her family to start their holiday season.

Each of these accidents could have been prevented had the users worn the appropriate safety gear and observed the stand's weight capacity. Realizing that, before you go up in a tree stand ask yourself, "Isn't it worth that extra second to put on my safety gear?" Think about your wife and kids, girlfriend, or parents before you answer that question.

Failing to wear a proper safety harness is not the only reason hunters fall from tree stands and are injured or killed. According to the Missouri Department of Conservation, other reasons include improper stand installation, faulty equipment,

missed steps as hunters climb trees, and falling asleep in the stand. To prevent these accidents, the Missouri Department of Conservation offers the following tips:

1. Inspect your equipment prior to the opening of hunting season and after each use.
2. Thoroughly read the instructions for your tree stand and all associated safety gear prior to use.
3. A full body safety harness provides better protection than a safety belt.
4. Make sure that you don't track excess mud onto either your tree climbing steps or the tree stand base.
5. Avoid putting your climbing-type tree stand in a tree with very smooth or thin bark.
6. Test your tree stand's stability and have your safety strap in place before putting all of your weight on it.
7. Never modify your equipment.
8. Choose your tree carefully and avoid trees that appear to be hollow or rotten. Remember that rotten tree limbs can easily break loose and fall on you.
9. Always unload your weapon and never attempt to climb with your bow or gun. Always raise your equipment with a rope once you are properly seated and strapped into your stand. Rifles should be raised and lowered butt-first so that the muzzle is pointing away from you.
10. Never lower your equipment down directly underneath your stand. Should you fall while climbing down, landing on your bow and arrow could add to your injuries.
11. Safety harnesses connect you to the tree. The wrenching stop from a fall as short as two feet can break bones. Keep your lifelines short — six to 12 inches is plenty. A body harness will better disperse the shock to your body than a safety belt, should a fall occur. A single loop safety or body strap must be worn high on your body — across your chest and under your arms. It should NEVER, ever be worn around your waist.
12. Carry a compact survival/first aid kit with you when you're in the woods.
13. Even if you have a cellular phone, it's always a good idea to let someone know that you're going into the woods and approximately what time you expect to be back.
14. Remember: Hunt safe, hunt smart! ■



**"What is  
wrong with  
this picture?"**

# Don't Count on

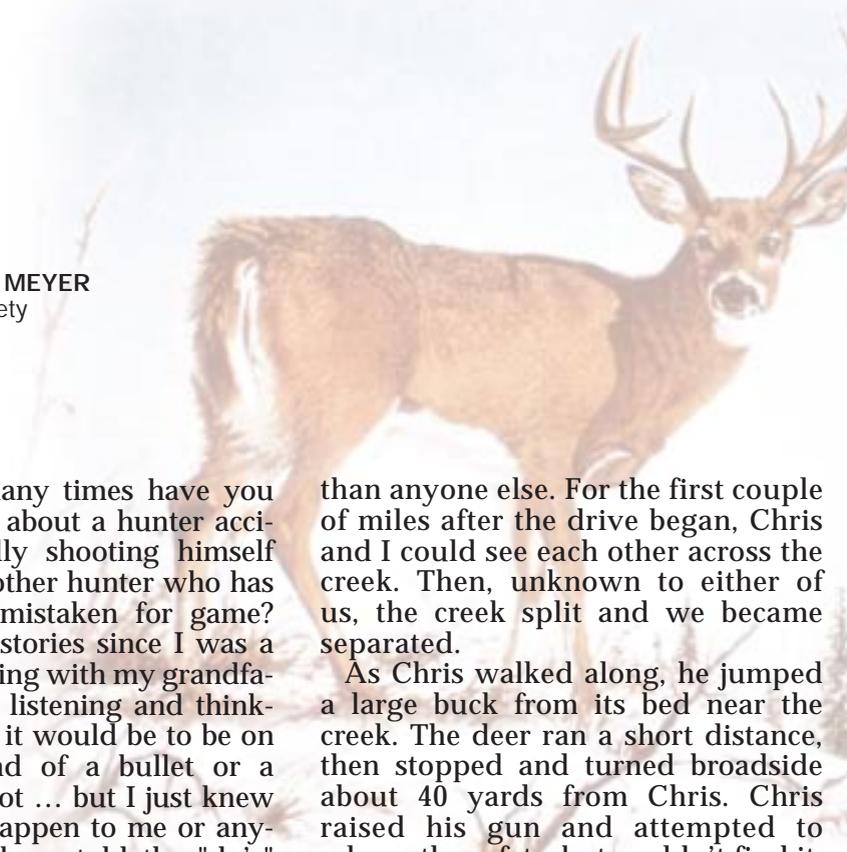
**TSGT CHARLES W. MEYER**  
92 ARW Ground Safety  
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**H**ow many times have you heard about a hunter accidentally shooting himself or another hunter who has been mistaken for game? I've heard these stories since I was a young child hunting with my grandfather. I remember listening and thinking how horrible it would be to be on the receiving end of a bullet or a charge of buckshot ... but I just knew it would never happen to me or anyone I knew. I'd been told the "do's" and "don'ts" of firearm safety. My hunting buddies and I could have written a book with the amount of preaching we'd heard. Well, one day we learned first-hand that an accident can happen to anyone.

It was a cold January day in northwest Florida (it does get cold in Florida). Several of my friends and I decided to try and drive deer through an area where we'd seen them earlier in the year. My best friend, Chris, and I were selected to be the "drivers." Our job consisted of walking along a creek bottom while yelling and throwing rocks and tree limbs in an attempt to chase the deer to the other hunters. We didn't mind being the drivers because the drivers usually saw and killed more deer

than anyone else. For the first couple of miles after the drive began, Chris and I could see each other across the creek. Then, unknown to either of us, the creek split and we became separated.

As Chris walked along, he jumped a large buck from its bed near the creek. The deer ran a short distance, then stopped and turned broadside about 40 yards from Chris. Chris raised his gun and attempted to release the safety, but couldn't find it. The gun was a new 12-gauge pump shotgun he'd gotten for Christmas a few days earlier and he hadn't familiarized himself with the weapon. Needless to say, the deer ran off and Chris, feeling disgusted, cursed the safety. Thinking he still might get a shot at the buck, Chris released the safety and attempted to follow the deer. No luck! As Chris ended his section of the drive, he approached one of the other hunters and again cursed his bad luck. Tired from the long walk, Chris rested the butt of his shotgun on the ground, then placed his right hand over the top of the barrel to balance himself as he lowered himself to one knee. Just then, his left arm slipped off his knee and — luck not being with him — his left hand



# ... Being Lucky

raked the trigger and caused the shotgun to discharge.

Hearing the shot I thought, "Great — someone else got a deer after Chris and I did all the work!" Not until later when no one came to pick me up, did I realize there might be a problem. I heard a series of quick gunshots, followed by car horns blowing, and then silence. I walked for a little while before finally being picked up by a fellow hunter who informed me of the bad news. It

seemed Chris had gotten "lucky." He'd only shot off half of his right pointer finger.

Firearms accidents can happen to anyone — even to those who've been trained in hunting safety and should know better. Chris only lost part of a finger, but others have lost their lives due to the careless handling of firearms. Nothing — not even a chance at dropping a big buck — is more important than handling a gun safely. ■



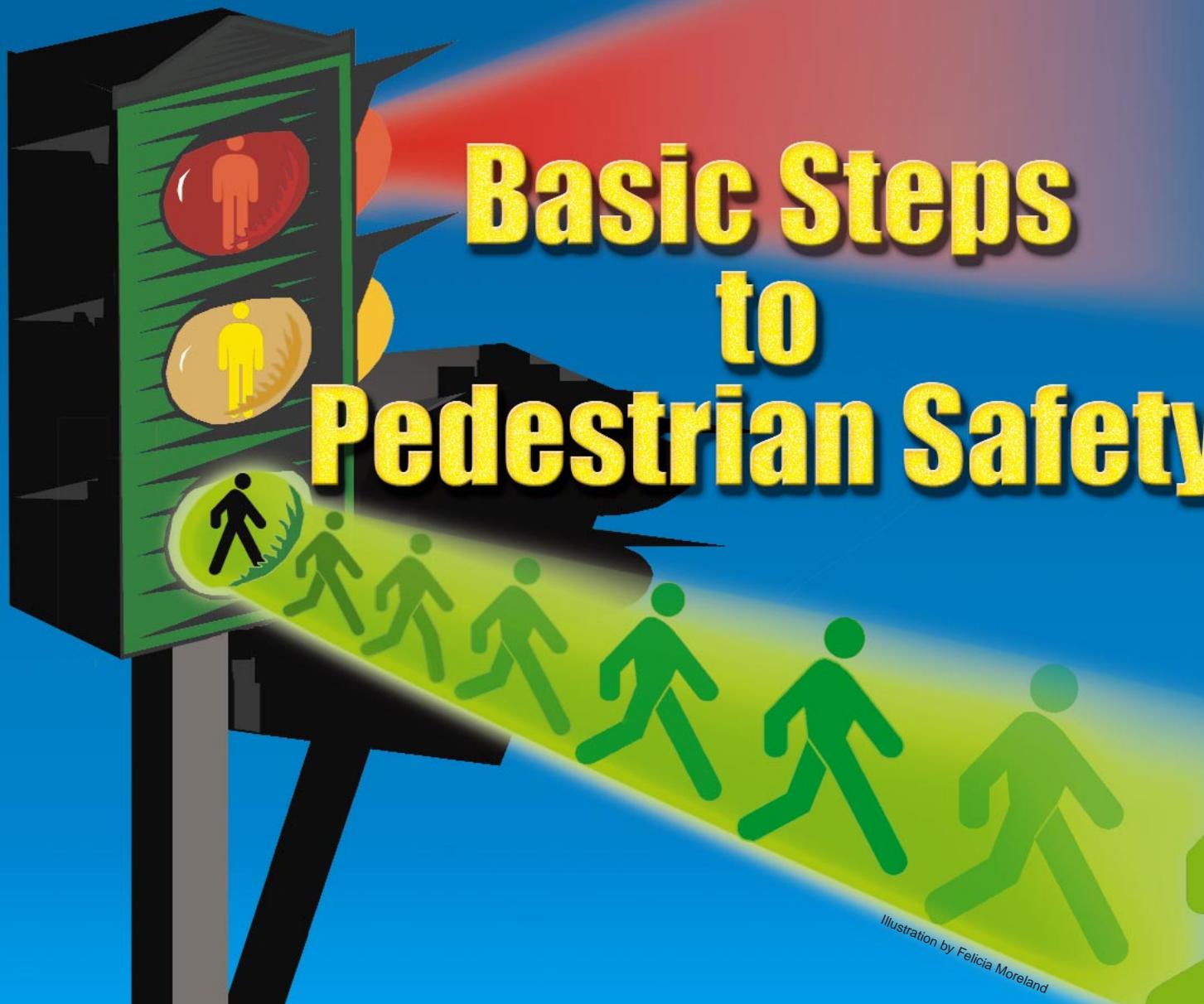


Illustration by Felicia Moreland

Reprinted from *Safety Times*

Each year more than 6,000 people are struck and killed by motor vehicles. That's about one fatality every 90 minutes. In addition, almost 100,000 pedestrians are injured annually. And in almost every case the accident was the fault of the walker, not of the driver.

#### **Pedestrian Refresher Course**

**H**ere's a brief review to help you get safely from here to there.

- Before crossing a road, always stop at the curb, look left, then right, and then left again before crossing. Take the time to search for oncoming vehicles.
- Walk fast, but don't run. Keep looking until you're safely across.
- When your view is blocked by a parked car, or when you are crossing between

parked cars (and this is not recommended) move out slowly to where you can see approaching traffic clearly.

- Yes, a portable radio or tape player may put some added bounce in your step. However, it could get you bounced, too. Keep your mind and your ears focused on your walking. Tune into your surroundings and the possible dangers that exist there. Leave the entertainment at home.
- Where there are no sidewalks, always walk or run facing traffic and stay as far to the left as possible. By facing traffic, you can see a potential hazard and react in time to avoid it. When an adult is walking with a child, the adult should walk between the child and the roadway, acting as a more visible buffer to approaching vehicles.
- Remember, a flashing "Don't Walk" light means do not begin to cross the street (especially with the growing penchant for drivers to run red lights). Pedestrians al-

- ready in the street should continue walking and complete their crossing.
- Don't try to save a few seconds by crossing against the light.
  - A significant percentage of adult pedestrians killed by motor vehicles were intoxicated. If you've had too much to drink, call a cab or have a friend drive you home. Friends shouldn't let friends **walk** drunk, either.

### Staying Visible At Night

- Pedestrians are more likely to be killed after dark than during the day.
- Carry a flashlight or light stick.
- Wear light-colored clothes or those trimmed with retroreflective material.
- Cross where the lights are bright and visibility is good.

### Special Situations

- Be especially alert in winter, which brings reduced visibility for pedestrians and drivers. Steam or frosted windshields, snow and sleet, and earlier dusk and darkness make it difficult to see and be seen.
- Drivers can be blinded by the sun at dawn and sunset. Be extra careful then.
- Certain locations require added caution:
  - Along high-speed highways and strip shopping areas where motorists don't expect pedestrians.
  - Near construction work zones. Often sidewalks are closed, and drivers are distracted. Select an alternative route.
  - On rural roads where there are no sidewalks.
  - Train tracks, because it's difficult to judge a train's speed.
- When carrying an umbrella, make sure your vision is clear, and be aware of traffic.
- Be alert for cars backing out of parking spaces.
- When exiting your car in traffic, get out of the passenger side, if possible.

### Senior Tips

- Wear bright colors during the day.
- If there's concern about being able to cross the street, wait until the light has just turned green. The first few steps into the street are the most dangerous. Drivers will have noticed you by the time you approach the other side.
- Compensate for diminished vision, hearing, and mobility by concentrating on your surroundings.
- Stay away from traffic after taking medication that causes dizziness or blurs vision. ■

## We'd Like to Publish Your Story!



We know there are some great experiences out there just waiting to be told, so how about jotting them down. We'd like to hear from you — how your use of a seat belt or helmet saved your life or protected you from serious injury, or some lessons you've learned concerning driving or recreational safety. Sharing your experiences with other *Road & Rec* readers can be an excellent, entertaining way of helping us get the safety message out to your fellow airmen.

We accept articles of any length. A double-spaced Microsoft Word® e-mail attachment is best. Any supporting color slides, color photos, or graphics you can contribute will be greatly appreciated. You can be sure your byline will accompany the story so that you will receive full credit for your contribution.

You can reach us by mail at **HQ AFSC/SEMM, 9700 G Avenue SE, Kirtland AFB, New Mexico 87117-5670**, or call commercial at (505) 846-0983 or DSN 246-0983. You can also fax to DSN 246-0931 or E-mail to [Robert.VanElsberg@kafb.af.mil](mailto:Robert.VanElsberg@kafb.af.mil).

We look forward to hearing from you and sharing your story!!! ■

# Fractured Follies

BOB VAN ELSBERG  
Managing Editor

## Distracted In The Driveway

If you don't have an opinion on the subject of drivers and cell phones, you probably haven't driven much lately. With distracted drivers causing mayhem on the roads, you'd at least like to think that you'd be safe standing in the driveway. But, you'd be wrong.

Enter Exhibit One, a young airman who'd driven about 250 miles one weekend last May to visit a friend. As Sunday afternoon came around, our airman, before heading home, decided to check his engine oil. Popping the hood of his car — which he conveniently parked in his friend's driveway — our airman pulled out the dipstick for a quick look. And a good thing it was that he checked, because his engine was a bit low. Figuring that wasn't a good omen for the four-hour drive home, our airman began pouring a quart of oil into his engine. So far, so good — our airman was minimizing risks through preventative maintenance. Pure ORM at work.

Enter Exhibit Two, our airman's friend. Hopping into his car, which was parked a little further up the driveway, he started the engine and shifted into reverse. Being a multi-talented sort of guy, he punched some numbers into his cell phone as he prepared for his journey. Holding the compact communicator to his head and articulating over the airwaves, he eased backwards toward the street with nary a care in the world. Not even a glance in the rearview mirror.

Did I say, "backwards toward the street?" Well, almost. The street was there, just like it had always been. However, today there were a couple of obstacles — Exhibit One and his car.

Backing the 30 feet at a modest 5 mph,

it only took a few moments for the rear bumper of Exhibit Two's car and the front bumper of Exhibit One's car to meet. Did I say, "meet"? Well, almost. This is where we get some "good" news and some "bad" news. The good news is that both vehicles were spared the full damage of a 5 mph bumper-to-bumper impact — which can be expensive. The bad news is that it was Exhibit One — standing in front of his car and leaning over the engine — whose legs provided the "cushioning effect."

Exhibit One, in his new role as a "manwich," was not a happy camper. Extricating himself from this automotive squeeze play, he hobbled back to his friend's house. In a true spirit of "joint" service, doctors at a nearby Army base checked his knees and legs, confirming they weren't broken.

Did I say, "good news"? Well, almost. His legs weren't broken, but he had bruises to his leg bones and knee joints. Within a few hours of the accident, his knees stiffened, making him a perfect choice for the role of the Tin Soldier. Not, however, that our airman needed to worry about marching. The Air Force doctors took one look at his "knocked-knees" and gave him two days of quarters to recuperate. Wonder if his distracted driving buddy got two points on his record?

## Barefoot In The Grass

Ah, spring was in the air and the lawn had finished its winter hibernation and was looking green again. It was also growing again, which meant it was time to take a trip around the yard with the lawn mower. The yard looks so nice when it has been freshly "manicured."

Our airman decided to enjoy the spring weather while she went about her lawn mowing chore. Her work "ensemble" consisted of shorts, a T-shirt and bare feet. After all, there's nothing quite like the feeling of soft, cushiony grass beneath one's feet.



Firing-up her self-propelled mower, she set about her chore. About a third of the way through the task, she discovered that she needed to back up a short distance. Perhaps considering this nothing more than a minor "bump in the road," she backpedaled, pulling the still-running mower behind her. However, what she didn't consider — or even notice — was an above ground electrical junction box in the middle of the path behind her.

Well, you guessed it. Nothing quite upsets one's balance like an unseen object in the path of a foot. Fully in gravity's grasp as she made the rapid rearward transition to the horizontal, she instinctively held onto the mower's handle. Now, you have to understand the basic physics of this. Had she fallen forward, she would've pushed the mower further away from her. Instead, however, as she fell rearwards, she pulled her grass-grazing "cuisinart" over her right foot.

Now, this wouldn't be fun even if she'd been wearing steel-toed shoes. However, as you recall, her lawn-mowing ensemble did not include footwear.

On the good side, as she landed on the ground she released the mower's safety lever, thus stopping the engine. Unfortunately, it takes a few revolutions before everything stops. And ugly things can happen during those few revolutions.

And, indeed they did. Before the blade stopped spinning, our airman's big toe had a "close encounter" of the worst kind. Although her finger and toe count still totals 20, her big toe suffered, according to the report, a "partial avulsion." Since "avulsion" doesn't normally come up in polite, casual conversation, I had to look it up in the dictionary. Basically, imagine taking a dull knife and vigorously peeling the skin off a potato ... well, you get the picture.

The bottom line is to use a little ORM and dress for safety when mowing the lawn. Before you fire-up the mower, check the area you're going to mow for any hazards that could "trip-up" your day. Also, protect your feet with steel-toed boots and save your barefoot strolls in the grass for when you're NOT mowing. Steel blades are, after all, very hard on tender toes. ■

# Injuries in the Workplace

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**Editor's Note: Having experienced Carpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) as this article was being written, I found the information of special interest. MSgt Swanson's article is aimed primarily at people who work at computer workstations, although they aren't the only people who develop this problem. I sought treatment early and appropriately modified my workstation. As a result, my symptoms went away. However, if not treated early enough, CTS can be debilitating and require surgery to correct.**

**C**arpal Tunnel Syndrome (CTS) occurs when the membranes surrounding the wrist tendons become swollen or thickened because of repetitive wrist motion, fluid retention, pregnancy, acute trauma or other causes. This swelling puts pressure on the median nerve within the carpal tunnel area of the wrist, causing CTS.

Some common complaints from CTS sufferers are, "My hands wake me up at night," "I feel like I'm going to drop things," or "My fingers feel numb and tingly." Poor grip strength is also a common sign. Although there are many causes, typing on a computer, operating a cash register, playing musical instruments, or using vibrating tools are some of the more common repetitive tasks that can cause CTS.

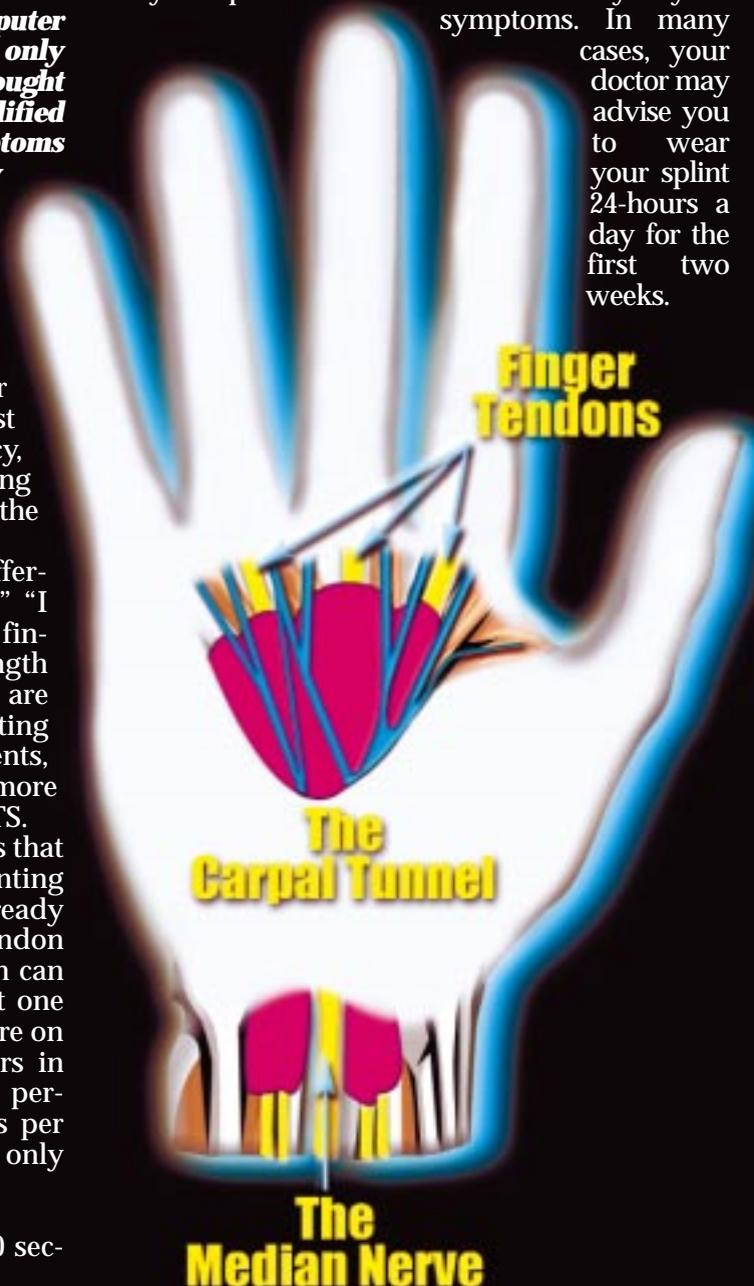
Taking frequent breaks from the activities that cause CTS is an important step in preventing and treating the problem. If you have already begun to suffer the symptoms, simple tendon gliding exercises and wrist immobilization can help. Several studies have found that just one minute of exercising can reduce the pressure on the median nerve for up to several hours in some cases. These exercises should be performed approximately two to three times per day with 10 repetitions each. They should only take a couple of minutes to perform.

**1.** Make a tight fist and hold for five to 10 seconds.

**2.** Make a fist and then straighten your back knuckles. If done correctly, your fingers will appear to make a "hook." Hold for five to 10 seconds.

**3.** Now extend all your fingers and spread them apart. Hold for five to 10 seconds.

**4.** Wrist splints are another way to treat CTS. Your therapist or doctor will determine the length of your splint wear based on the severity of your symptoms. In many cases, your doctor may advise you to wear your splint 24-hours a day for the first two weeks.



# Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Also, it is important to wear your splint at night. When you sleep, your body tends to relax and curl up into a comfortable posture commonly called the "fetal position." In this relaxed position, your wrists tend to bend, causing increased pressure on the carpal tunnel area. If your base has an occupational therapy clinic, you should be able to get a custom-made splint. If you can't get a custom-made splint, over-the-counter (OTC) splints often work just as well. Also, in some cases, your doctor may provide you with an OTC splint.

Vibration is another common

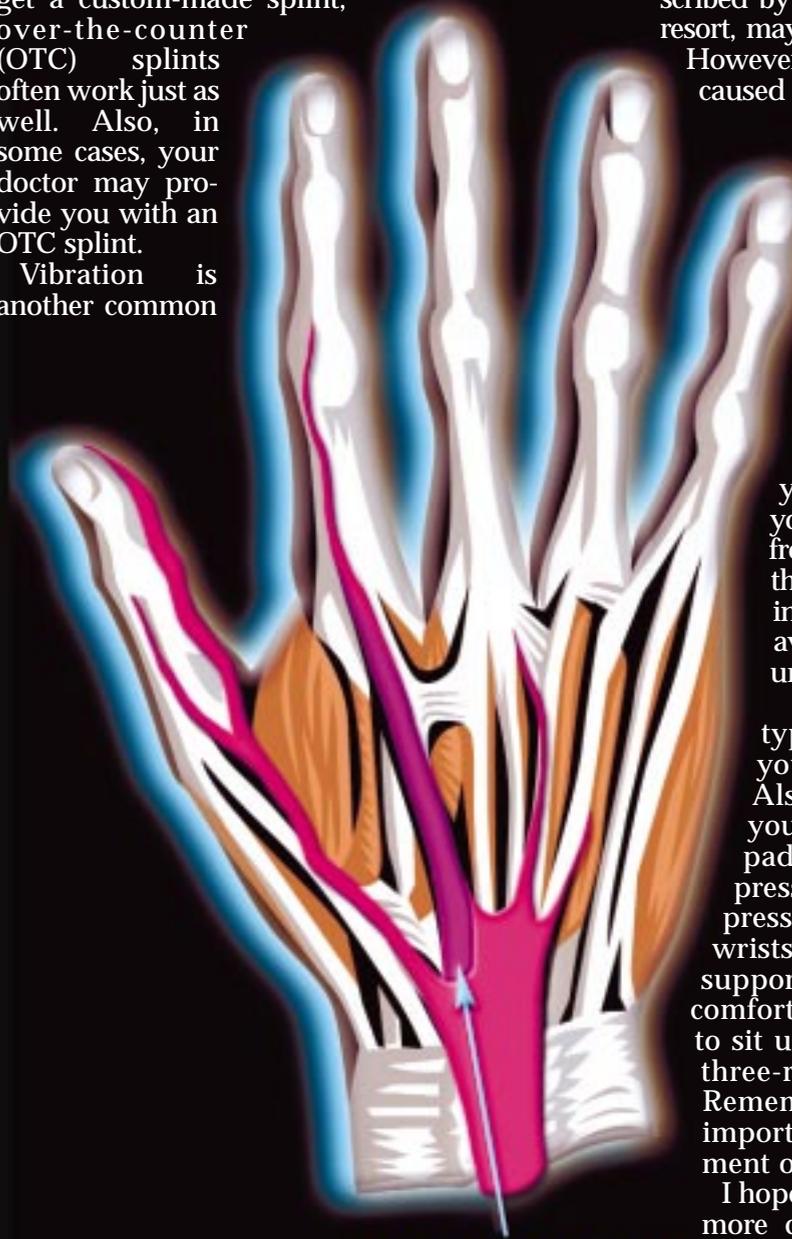
cause of CTS. Workers who use impact tools, power tools, or equipment such as lawn mowers may suffer from CTS. Padding the handles on these tools to decrease the impact or vibration will help. Also, wearing anti-vibration gloves or even a good pair of work gloves may help prevent you from having CTS.

Treatment, prevention measures, medicines prescribed by your doctor or even surgery, as a last resort, may be needed to relieve your symptoms.

However, returning to the same activities that caused your CTS without modifying your workstation may cause your symptoms to return. To help prevent that, an ergonomics evaluation may be appropriate. Your base's Bioenvironmental Engineering Service can provide you with useful recommendations on how you need to modify your workstation. In the meantime, here are some simple recommendations to get you started. Remember when Mom used to say, "Sit up straight!" Well, she was right. Ensure you have a proper posture by raising your monitor and placing it directly in front of you so that your eyes are viewing the top portion of the screen. Avoid typing while looking down or at an angle. To avoid that, you may want to attach a document holder to your monitor.

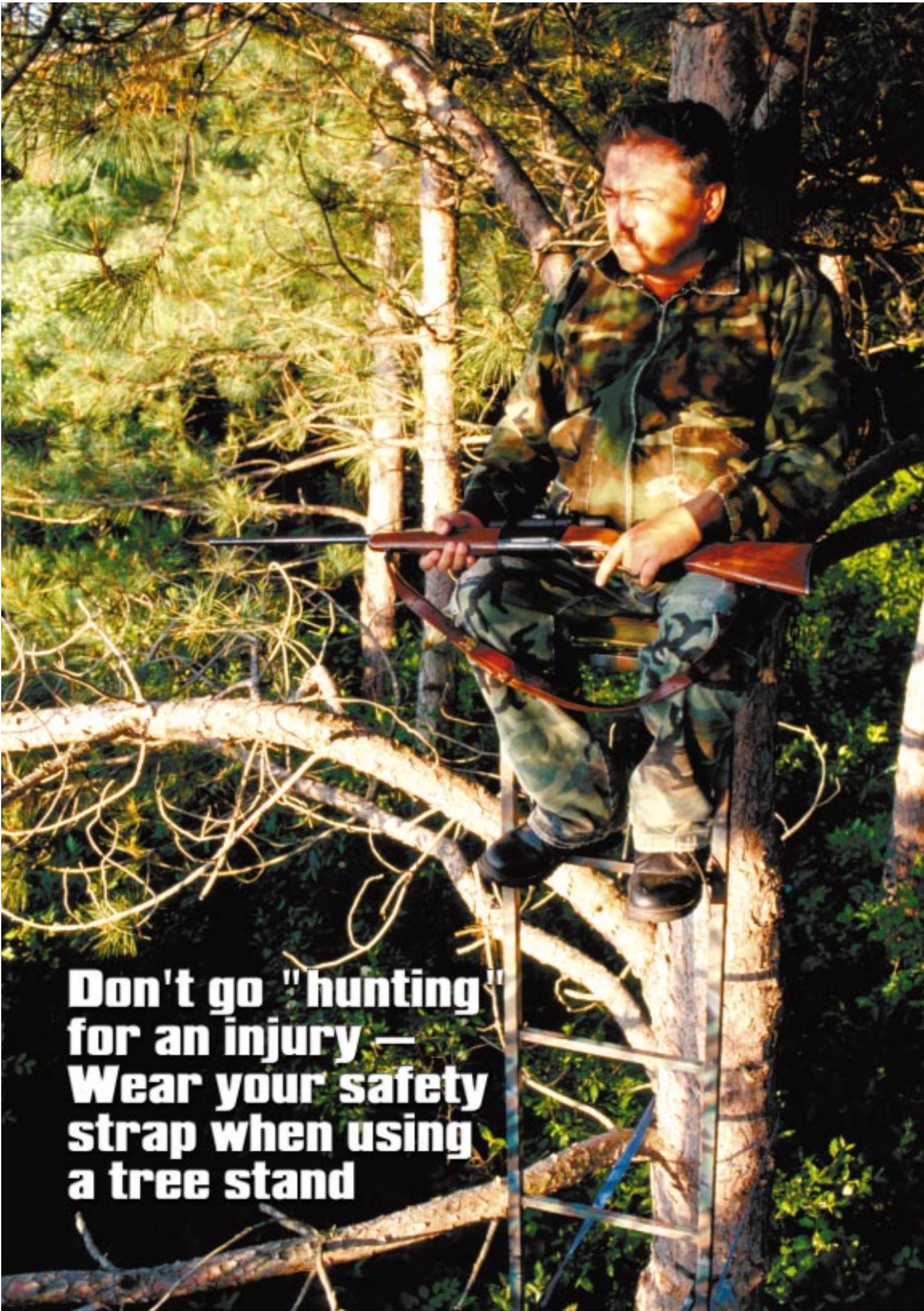
If you can, wear your splint while typing, or adjust the keyboard so that you don't have to bend your wrists. Also, try bringing your mouse closer to you. In addition, keyboard and mouse pads may help, but be careful not to press down on them. They are not "wrist presses," but reminders not to bend your wrists. A good chair providing lumbar support will also help make you more comfortable. Using a footrest reminds you to sit up straight in your chair. Use an old three-ring binder if you're not picky. Remember that frequent breaks are an important step in the prevention and treatment of CTS.

I hope this information makes your job/life more comfortable, enjoyable, and productive. Please contact your doctor if you suspect you have Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. ■



**Carpal Tunnel**

Illustration by Felicia Moreland



**Don't go "hunting"  
for an injury —  
Wear your safety  
strap when using  
a tree stand**